



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

# News Release

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## 2 HUMAN SMUGGLERS ARRESTED BY ICE

*-Smugglers also charged with document fraud-*

PONCE, Puerto Rico— Two men who allegedly assisted illegal aliens from the Dominican Republic to travel from Puerto Rico to the continental United States in furtherance of a scheme that began in the Dominican Republic were arrested Friday at the Mercedita Airport by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents.

Dominican nationals Christian Martinez-Leypa, 27 and Jesus Mejias-Baez, 34 were part of a human smuggling scheme that operated using fraudulent documents in an attempt to smuggle illegal aliens into the country.

Martinez-Leypa was intercepted by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) inspectors as he tried to board a flight to New York City from Ponce, Puerto Rico. He was allegedly accompanied by Mejias-Baez, who presented a fraudulent Puerto Rican driver's license and Social Security card to CBP inspectors.

A preliminary ICE investigation revealed that Martinez-Leypa allegedly assisted Mejias-Baez to illegally travel to the United States through the use of fraudulent documents.

Martinez-Leypa and Mejias-Baez were charged with alien smuggling in violation of Title 8, United States Code (USC), Section 1325. Mejias-Baez was also charged for providing a false statement and knowingly possessing fraudulent identification documents in violation to Title 18, USC, Section 1001 and 1028.

“Human smugglers who think that the chances of getting caught decrease by using smaller Puerto Rican airports are mistaken,” said Lydia St. John-Mellado, acting special agent-in-charge of ICE in Puerto Rico. “ICE and our Department of Homeland Security partners are as vigilant at secondary airports and ports-of-entry as we are at the Luis Munoz Marin International Airport and the San Juan Seaport.”

Martinez-Leypa and Jesus Mejias are in federal custody at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico awaiting the outcome of their case.

Disrupting and dismantling human smuggling and trafficking rings has been a top priority for ICE

since the agency was established in March 2003, given the potential threat that these organizations pose both to national security and public safety. With ICE's broad authorities for enforcing immigration and customs laws and its expertise in financial investigations, the agency is able to pursue human smuggling organizations more aggressively than ever before. As a result, ICE agents arrested more than 1,630 human smugglers nationwide in fiscal year 2004.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*